



# *News Release*

## **PRESS OFFICE**

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## ***SBA Announces Support for 10 Regional 'Innovative Economies' Clusters, Local Job Creation***

**WASHINGTON** – SBA Administrator Karen Mills announced today the U.S. Small Business Administration's support for 10 regional economic development and job creation efforts through a new pilot program, "Innovative Economies."

The pilot program supports small businesses participation in regional economic "clusters" – collaborations between small businesses, the public sector, economic development and other organizations.

"Maximizing a region's economic assets is one of the best ways to create long term job growth, and that's what SBA's new Innovative Economies pilot initiative is doing," Mills said. "Today we are announcing funding support for 10 regional economic clusters. SBA's support will help expand the opportunities and the role small businesses play in these regional collaborations, which are enhancing the ability to create jobs locally and compete on a national and global scale."

The 10 "Innovative Economies" awardees selected from among 173 applicants to participate in the pilot program represent a wide range of diverse geographic areas and industries. From urban to rural and clean energy to robotics, the applicants focused on leading research and commercializing new products.

SBA's funding will be provided to each cluster's organizing entity to strengthen opportunities for small businesses within the cluster. The funds can be used to provide services, including mentoring and counseling small businesses, as well as to attract more small business participation.

SBA is supporting two types of innovative economies: Regional Innovation Clusters and Advanced Defense Technologies. The seven Regional Innovation Clusters focus on providing business training, commercialization and technology transfer services, counseling, mentoring and other services that support the growth and development of small businesses in the cluster region.

The SBA also worked with the U.S. Department of Defense to identify areas around the country where regional innovation clusters can help meet critical defense technology needs. Three Advanced Defense Technology awardees will focus on providing business training, counseling, mentoring, matchmaking and other services to small businesses that focus on critical DoD technologies.

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## The 10 Innovative Economies Include:

**Agriculture Innovation Cluster** (Monterey – Santa Cruz – San Benito, Calif.) The AIC focus is on agricultural innovation, including production, related physical and human capital infrastructure, and leading-edge agriculture research.

**Carolinas' Nuclear Cluster** (N.C., S.C.) The Carolinas' Nuclear Cluster provides strategy, structure, and on-the-ground execution to grow the North and South Carolina businesses that serve the nuclear energy industry locally, regionally, and multi-nationally.

**Connecticut Hydrogen-Fuel Cell Coalition** (Conn., N.Y., Mass., Maine, Vt., N.H., R.I.) The Connecticut Hydrogen-Fuel Cell Coalition/Cluster, administered by the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, works to enhance economic growth by developing, manufacturing, and deploying fuel cell and hydrogen technologies and associated fueling systems.

**Enterprise for Innovative Geospatial Solutions** (Miss., La.) EIGS organizes complimentary geospatial businesses, government agencies, and educational institutions in Mississippi and the Louisiana Gulf Coast to help create a trained workforce, transfer geospatial technology from public institutions into the market, and foster new business growth. Geospatial technology is the combination of GPS (global positioning systems), GIS (geographical information systems), and satellite or aerial image-based remote sensing.

**Illinois Smart Grid Regional Innovation Cluster** (Ill.) The ISG-RIC is a collaboration of more than 100 entities (including 70 businesses) in the Chicago region, focused on the acceleration of Smart Grid innovation, deployments, and new market development. The Smart Grid is a convergence of technological and investment interests across multiple sectors, focused on using advanced technology to improve inefficient and outdated electric transmission infrastructure.

**NorTech** (Ohio) NorTech focuses on technology-based economic development in 21 counties of Northeast Ohio. Funds will help small business development within NorTech's FlexMatters initiative, which focuses on advanced energy and flexible electronics. Flexible electronics, which are electronic devices printed on flexible substrates, are emerging as a newly commercializable science, and a growing manufacturing opportunity.

**Upper Michigan Green Aviation Coalition** (UMi-GAC) (Mich.) The Upper Michigan Green Aviation Coalition is a public-private partnership with 41 active members, focused on expanding the green aviation industry.

**Defense Alliance of Minnesota** (Minn., N.D., S.D., Wis.) The Defense Alliance of Minnesota connects high technology innovation to defense industry opportunities and accelerating technology transfer of R&D and into commercial markets.

**San Diego Advanced Defense Cluster** (San Diego, Calif.) The San Diego Advanced Defense Cluster focuses on autonomous systems and cyber security, as well as other technologies applicable to defense needs.

**Von Braun Center for Science and Innovation** (Huntsville, Ala.) VCSI's primary focus is Aero-Space technology with applications for NASA, DoD, and NOAA. Its projects have included robotics for the detection of Improvised Explosive Devices, supporting spacecraft launches and building new micro satellites.

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